



Technology Enhances Rural Quality of Life

Over the past 10 years, TOP has awarded 255 grants to rural communities. TOP has invested in projects that enhance economic development, provide telehealth applications, lower costs and increase the quality of rural services, monitor natural resource use, focus on culture and heritage, and reduce emergency response time.

Community Partners (Amherst, Massachusetts) is speeding the receipt of health care benefits for rural western Massachusetts residents by equipping outreach workers with PC tablets and Wi-Fi Internet access. These portable tools allow them to connect to the Internet and to RealBenefits in the field, conducting streamlined electronic screening and enrollment for MassHealth and other programs.

Mountain Association for Community Economic Development (Berea, Kentucky) is providing high school students and small business owners in rural eastern Kentucky with laptops and connectivity in order to develop business skills. The project aims to reverse the strong trend of youth out-migration from this Appalachian region. Youth will gain skills and start their own businesses assisting other business owners, increasing the asset base of four communities.

University of Alaska at Fairbanks (Fairbanks, Alaska) is enabling teachers, students, and learners of all ages across this largely rural state to access the University of Alaska Museum resources. The network will share resources including historical photos, films, rare maps, oral histories, and manuscript collections with two remote school districts.

North Carolina Rural Economic Development Center, Inc. (Raleigh, North Carolina) is creating e-government in rural counties and municipal governments. The online services include transactional websites that tap local cultural heritage as an economic development tool. The project is training fifty-five local governments in the use of web based IT tools to improve the delivery of public services.

North Dakota State University (Fargo, North Dakota) is giving North Dakota farmers and ranchers access to broadband technology tools to better compete in the agricultural marketplace. Access to advanced communications helps the agricultural community handle marketplace volatility, and enables better marketing and production decisions.

Sevier River Water Users Association (Delta, Utah) is creating a real-time river basin monitoring and control system for water management. Environmental sensors connected to a wireless network enable water users to better manage farms, increase crop yields, and improve emergency response to floods. It provides real-time data including water levels, water rights, river operations, irrigation scheduling, and forecasting.

